



Omni-Channel Retail Strategies: An outlook to Portuguese business transformation

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Dissertation Proposal

Master in Management

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September 2015

Biographic note

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During his academic studies, he had two international experiences. The first in Cracow, Poland during his bachelor in 2012 and the second in Marseille, France in 2014. These international experiences enforce the international profile that André is looking for.

André works in the management consulting field in Portugal, having experienced advisory, audit and tax projects. He was also involved in a couple of non-profit organizations such as AIESEC in which he worked as an account manager and FEP Management Club, an organization recently created within FEP.

Acknowledgments

Once upon a time, there was a little boy who wanted to create an impact. The first years of his life were perhaps the most important and when he still didn't know what to do, where to go and how to behave, their relatives were there and made him progress. While learning the cultural values, he defined his personality and who he would like to become.

Today he is closing a remarkable cycle of his life and it is the moment to express his gratitude.

For my family, friends, professors and strangers, I would like to thank you all.

To my family for teaching me how to walk, speak and love. For supporting in what I consider an interesting academic career that was only possible because of you.

To my friends for playing and being with me. For having coffee with me while discussing the marvellous jokes of the business, academic and fun world.

To all my professors for guiding me through this endless journey called learning.

I also would like to thank «the crazy ones, the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square holes... the ones who see things differently»¹. Without you, I wouldn't want to become a manager, the challenges and opportunities that you have always created, make me feel motivated and thrive my every day's best.

¹ Steve Jobs (1955-2011)

Abstract:

No one can neglect the transition stage from Multi to Omni-channel strategies. While multi-channel focused on the combination of independent multi channels, Omni-Channel presents itself as the full integration of channels, able to deliver a seamless shopping experience to customers.

Considering the business environment, it is possible to highlight Omni-Channel as a hot topic for further exploration. Reconfiguration of the physical store, ubiquitously, showrooming and a higher focus to convenience stores are critical aspects to consider when implementing and executing an Omni-channel strategy (BCG, 2012; Gallino & Moreno, 2014; McKinsey&Company, 2012).

Literature on Omni-channel is still in its infancy and there is a need for more comprehensive research in this area. An outlook to Portuguese retailers' channels transformation will not only contribute to the literature but it will contribute to retailers crafting strategies.

The current dissertation aims to analyse the current state of channels' strategies in Portugal based on retailers' perspective. Several semi-structured interviews with retailers were conducted and data was analysed using NVivo QSR International.

Results suggest that Portugal is technological ready for the Omni-channel promise. However, Portuguese lack of online players and risk taking culture are delaying its arrival. Nevertheless, retailers believe that in the long-term they will achieve economies of scale when using Omni.-channel strategies.

Further practical and theoretical contributions of this study are also discussed.

Key-words: Ecommerce, Omni-Channel, Multi-Channel, Retail

JEL CODES: L14, L81, M10, M31, O31

Resumo

A fase de transição das estratégias Multi para Omni-canal é inegável. Enquanto muitas estratégias Multi-canal focam a combinação de independentes múltiplos canais, o Omni-canal figura como a integração total dos canais, capaz de possibilitar uma experiência de compra única aos consumidores.

Tendo em conta o ambiente de negócio, é possível destacar o Omni-canal como tópico da moda para investigação. Reconfiguração das lojas físicas, oportunidades tecnológicas, expansão da “internet das coisas”, *showrooming* e maior foco na conveniência são aspetos críticos a considerar quando se implementa e executa uma estratégia Omni-canal (BCG, 2012; Gallino & Moreno, 2014; McKinsey&Company, 2012).

A literatura ainda está no seu início no que toca ao Omni-canal e existe uma necessidade de estudos mais detalhados quanto a esta temática. Propomos uma visão panorâmica da transformação das estratégias de canal em Portugal que não irá apenas contribuir para a literatura académica mas também irá adicionar algumas linhas orientadoras para os retalhistas considerarem aquando da refinação das suas estratégias.

O objetivo desta dissertação é analisar o estado atual da combinação da oferta de retalho entre canais em Portugal tendo por base a perspetiva dos retalhistas. Para atingir esse objetivo e uma vez que não existe consenso literário quanto ao tópico, foram conduzidas entrevistas semiestruturadas com retalhistas. A opinião dos retalhistas foi analisada recorrendo ao *software NVivo QSR International* de modo a gerar conhecimento científico relativamente às estratégias Omni-canal.

Os resultados sugerem que Portugal está preparado tecnologicamente para as estratégias Omni-canal. No entanto, o baixo nível de marcas presentes no *online* e a cultura de risco portuguesa estão a atrasar a sua chegada. Não obstante, os retalhistas acreditam que no longo prazo será possível atingir economias de escala com as estratégias Omni-canal.

Palavras-chave: Comércio online, Omni-canal, Multi-canal, Retalho

JEL CODES: L14, L81, M10, M31, O31

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the current state of channels' strategies in Portugal. Considering the three levels: customer, retail firm and contracts, retail firm level was defined as the scope of the current project, not only for personal interest on marketing strategy and structural organization, but also because of retailers' constant transformation and adaptation. For the scope of the project, it was decided to investigate the specificities of the B2C markets which involve the direct sell to end-customers (Levy & Weitz, 1996).

It is possible to identify three stages by which retail channels have evolved. Retail started with a single channel approach in the market encompassing one channel to serve their customers (Chan, 2013). The bricks-and-mortar (B&M) was perhaps the first commonly used channel to approach customers and despite its age, retailers' current position still evidence their importance.

Afterwards, there was a transformation to a multichannel approach in which there were more than one channel to attain customers. Consultants (Deloitte, 2011) mentioned that the future of multichannel retailing will provide even more fascinating research opportunities which is in line with Omni-channel growing importance.

Harris (2012) believes that retail is moving towards Omni-channel which is presented as the next stage of evolution, from a single channel to a complete and holistic experience that merges various touch points. The defining characteristic of Omni-channel is the assumption that any given customer will evaluate the product-of-interest at several different points before making the final purchase (Dorman, 2013).

Urbany, Dickson, and Sawyer (2000) have already pointed that retailers tend to overestimate the size of the customer segment that regularly switches stores for price specials which was validated by a higher predominance of customer purchases in one store as well as the underestimation of in-store search and stockpiling by managers.

White, Joseph-Mathews, and Voorhees (2013) and Alvesson (2003) refer that retail strategy is becoming more complex and in order to improve our understanding of the effects of emerging strategies, more comprehensive research designs that simultaneously investigate the effects of multiple strategies are required. Examples of non-answered questions within retail comprise

integration between platforms and channels, mobile channel impact and implications and the future outlook of stores considering Omni-channel evolutionary trajectory (Zhang et al., 2010).

Research still lacks of knowledge regarding Omni-channel which accounts for the interest to study the current state of channels' strategies in Portugal. Having in mind the feasibility of the current study, this dissertation seeks to answer the following question: "what is the current state of channels' strategies within B2C market in Portugal?"

For the purpose of the current project, a qualitative methodology was adopted, based on semi-structured interviews with retailers. The output of the interviews was then subjected to a content analysis through the use of QSR NVivo 10 which allowed to classify the unstructured data into relevant academic knowledge.

The structure of this dissertation is divided in three main parts: literature review, empirical analysis and conclusions.

The first part starts by more generalist aspects of retail such as its definitions and origins to clearly characterize the panorama. Retailers' channels strategies within Portugal will be also assessed during this part, as well as channels' evolution. Literature review covering Omni-channel strategies will be the final main topic, ending up the chapter with a synthesis of the main concepts.

The second part is the empirical analysis which clarifies the research topic, the methodology that was pursued for the course of the study, including the qualitative part, the interviews, the operationalization of the approach and the data gathering procedures. Furthermore, during this part, the main findings of the data analysis will be introduced as well as a discussion of results.

The third and final part of the project are the conclusions which include the main findings that were suggested by our analysis and future research lines and the main limitations that were considered when developing this project. In this part, the main implications for retailers' strategies will be highlighted so as to contribute to their strategy definition.

2. Literature Review

2.1. An Overview of Retail

This project aims to analyse the current state of channels' strategies based on retailers' perspectives. To achieve such a goal, a literature review of what is the activity, what it involves, why this study will add value to literature, which is the context of the study, and other relevant studies reflecting on this matter will be made across the current chapter.

Retail includes all of the activities involved in selling a good or service to an end customer for individual consumption. In other words, a retail sale is purchased for personal or family use. Any sale that is not made directly to a customer is not considered as a retail sale (Chan, 2013; Levy, Weitz, & Ajay, 2009). Retail is presented in several sector categories, including (Chan, 2013):

Table 1 - NAICS – North American Industry Classification System – Major Retail Classifications (Chan, 2013)

NAICS Code	Type of Business
441	Motor vehicle and parts dealers
442	Furniture and home furnishing stores
443	Electronics and appliances stores
444	Building mat. And garden equip. and suppliers dealers
445	Food and beverage stores
446	Health and personal care stores
447	Gasoline stations
448	Clothing and clothing access, stores
451	Sporting goods, hobby, book, and music stores
452	General merchandise stores
453	Miscellaneous store retailers
454	Nonstore retailers
722	Food services and drinking places

The designations/ way of grouping retail categories tend to vary, however, the previous classification suggested is MECE in our view, since the categories are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive and for presenting the panorama it is an accurate example.

There are three different retail environments: business to business, business to customer and customer to customer. For the scope of the current project, the business to customer environment will be the one addressed since there will be a deeper focus on the relationship between the retailer and the end-customer. In detail, retailers' level will be accessed since customers' level was more often assessed by previous projects (Cook, 2014; Lin, 2012; Persaud & Azhar, 2012; Reynolds & Sundström, 2014; Verhoef et al., 2009)

Levy and Weitz (1996) consider the three critical factors when analysing retail distribution to be: competition, changes in surrounding environment (demographics, technology, and life styles) and customers (their needs, demands and buying processes.

The most common retail formats are presented in the below chart which divides them by service and price level:

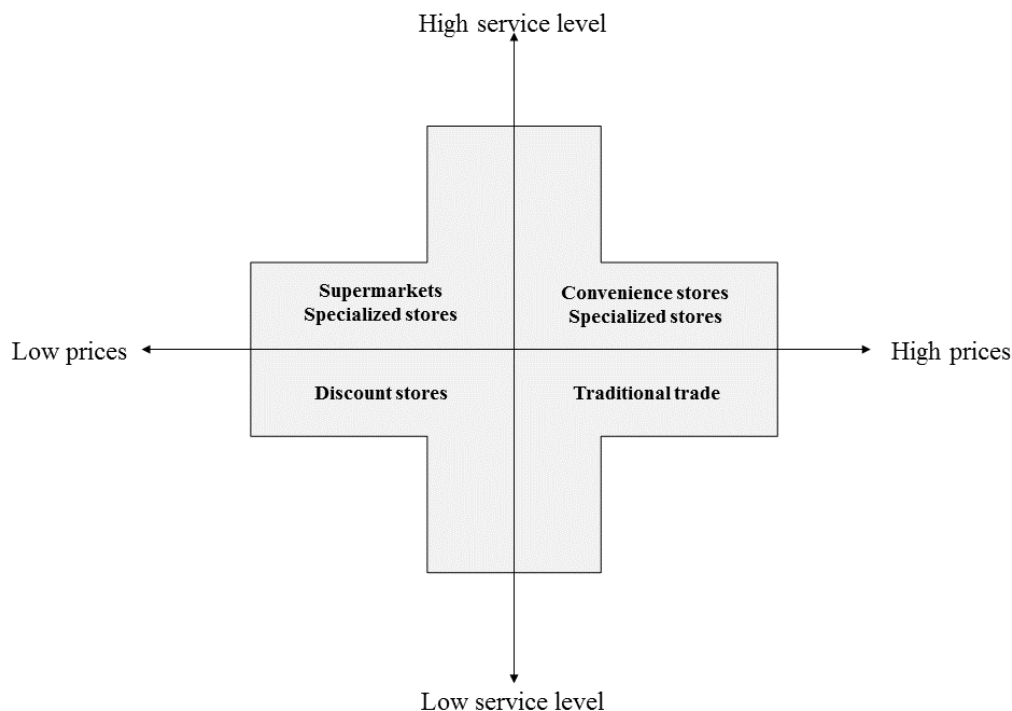


Figure 1 - Price and service level by retail format (Rosseau, 2008)

Rosseau (2008) divided retailers according to two different variables: price and service level. Supermarkets and specialized stores were pointed out as having high service level and low prices, discount stores were mentioned as providing low prices and low service level, traditional trade was indicated as offering low service level and high prices and finally convenience stores and specialized stores as compiling high prices and high service level.

Associated with these different formats, the whole ecosystem in which retail business exists, entails a widespread of challenges and opportunities which retailers have to handle. Zhang et al. (2010) point lack of access to broadband Internet service, integration operational difficulties and channel changing aspects as challenges while customer satisfaction, loyalty and creation of a strategic advantage are presented as opportunities.

2.1.1 World Retailing

Retail is highly segmented while being considerably influenced by macroeconomic factors such as GDP, disposable income, and customer spending. Global retail industry is forecasted to reach a CAGR of 3,9% between 2012-2017, summing up \$20,002 billion in 2017. The main drivers for this growth are rising GDP growth, burgeoning population, greater disposable income, and increasing customer spending (Lucintel, 2012). Developed economies are now emerging from recession leading to economic recovery, unemployment shrinkage and renewed growth.

Considering the growth by category, eMarketer (2014) made a numerical analysis of the market in the US and stated that ecommerce had double digit growth over the last 5 years and predictions point that the tendency will last at least until 2017. Considering the categories to follow, table 2 presents the predicted growth level for each of the segments until 2017(eMarketer, 2014):

Table 2 - Predicted growth by retail category

Computer & Customer Electronics	Apparel & Accessories	Books, music & video	Furniture & home furnishing	Auto & parts	Health & personal care	Toys & hobby	Office equipment & supplies	Food & Beverage	Other
22,1%	19,9%	9,5%	7,4%	6,9%	4,5%	3,6%	3,1%	2,4%	20,6%

Table 2 shows that computer & customer electronics and apparel & accessories present predicted growths of about 20% which represent the highest growth categories of the analysis. On the opposite side, office equipment & suppliers and food and beverage present predicted growths of

about 3%. The predicted growth variance is considerable, nevertheless, the growth potential of the internet sector is undeniable.

Retail sector can certainly be characterized by change. Indeed, it is validated by theories that seek to explain why new retail formats regularly appeared and existing retail business models are challenged (Findlay & Sparks, 2002; Reynolds & Sundström, 2014).

In that sense, consultants point the following trends as key issues for retailers to consider when addressing both present and future states. On the economic side, crisis period led to the growth of recession-trained and fixed-income shoppers. Additionally, customers' expectations created a need to further channel fragmentation (increase of non-store retail), to smaller footprints which imply smaller stores, supported by channels' changing role. Finally, technological advancements introduced the internet of things and the ubiquitous connectivity (BCG, 2012; Deloitte, 2011; EY, 2015; McKinsey&Company, 2012; PwC, 2015).

A characterization of the sector calls for a presentation of their biggest players. Deloitte (2015) presented the top 250 retailers by revenue from which the top were jointly selected with Portuguese retailers in order to bring closer the scope of the current project (table 3).

Table 3 - World Top Retailers 2015

Rank (FY13)	Name of company	Country of origin	2013 net retail revenue (US\$M)	Dominant operational format	2008-2014 retail revenue CAGR
1	Wal-Mart Stores, Inc	USA	476294	Hypermarket/ Supercentre/ Superstore	3,3%
2	Costco Wholesale Corporation	USA	105156	Cash & Carry/ Warehouse Club	7,7%
3	Carrefour, S.A.	France	98698	Hypermarket/ Supercentre/ Superstore	-3,0%

4	Schwartz Unternehems Treuland KG	Germany	98662	Discount Store	6,5%
5	Tesco PLC	UK	98631	Hypermarket/ Supercentre/ Superstore	2,9%
6	The Kroger Co.	USA	98375	Supermarket	5,3%
7	Metro Ag	Germany	86393	Cash & Carry/ Warehouse Club	-0,9%
8	Aldi Einkauf GmbH Co. oHG	Germany	81090	Discount Store	5,5%
9	The Home Depot, Inc.	USA	78812	Home Improvement	2,0%
10	Target Corporation	USA	75596	Discount Department Store	2,9%
15	Amazon.com, Inc	USA	60903	Non-Store	26,7%
62	Jerónimo Martins, SGPS, SA	Portugal	15712	Discount Store	12,3%
155	Sonae, SGPS, SA	Portugal	6144	Supermarket	1,9%

The concentration rate of the sector is undeniable, since the top 10 retailers almost a third of the world market. Also important to point the fact that the CAGR retail revenue 2008-2013 has an average growth of 3.0% for the top 10 retailers and an average of 4.2% for the top 250, which may predict some convergence in the sector.

From the top 10, Costco Wholesale Corporation (7.7%), Schwartz Unternehems Treuland KG (6,5%), The Kroger Co (5,3%) and Aldi Einkauf GmbH Co. oHG are above the average, while Carrefour, S.A (-3.0%) and Metro Ag. (-0,9%) are dropping. Also interesting to highlight is the rapid growth of Amazon.com, Inc (26,7%) which aims to reach the top 10 shortly. Europe and America are the continents with more retailers represented in the top 250, reaching together a total of 169 retailers.

Portuguese two major players, Jerónimo Martins SGPS, SA and Sonae SGPS, SA figured in the 62th and 155th places in the top 250 ranking.

2.1.2. Portuguese Retailing

Despite the lack of Portuguese retailing brands in the top 250 ranking, a considerable amount of international brands is operating in Portugal. For instance, Metro group (7th) which owns: Media Markt and Makro, the Auchan group (14th) which owns: Jumbo, Pão de Açúcar and Box; Inditext (44th) which owns Zara, Massimo Dutti, Pull and Bear and Springfield; El Corte Inglés (66th); DIA SA (72th) which owns Minipreço are some examples of retail groups that figure in the top 100 retailers (Deloitte, 2015).

The Bank of Portugal GDP predicted a 1,5% growth for 2015 and 1,7% for 2016. Therefore, it is reasonable to foresee some growing opportunities in the retail segment. In 2014, about 5 million people visited and searched e-commerce websites which represents approximately 80% of Portuguese web users. The most popular B2C retail visited websites were Fnac, Ikea and La Redoute which clearly show the Omni-channel intentions of Portuguese retailing players (Marktest, 2014).

Indeed, due to the rapid change of business, retailers are continuously trying new formats and offerings. For example, Continente is leveraging their online bet with user-friendly websites and a more efficient connection with B&M and Worten introduced the click and collect concept and ensured a 2-day home/store delivery. It is evident that Portuguese retailers are concerned about their inhabitants' behaviours and they are officially trying to do something.

In Europe, the adoption of information communications' technology is relatively high, but compared with the US, Europe has had far smaller productivity gains from it, and it is falling behind (Reynolds & Sundström, 2014). How would the Portuguese retail situation be defined? Should retailers care? Are they answering well to customers?

2.2. From Single Channels to Omni-channel

Neslin et al. (2006) define a channel as a customer contact point, or a medium through which the firm and the customer interact. When designing their channel strategy, retailers can choose from different retail formats to find the optimal mix for their organization.

The most popular channels are: 1 – B&M/ physical channel which enables instant gratification effect since the customer will get the products immediately (Agatz, Fleischmann, & Van Nunen, 2008) while the retailer has the possibility to provide a rich, multisensory brand experience (Rigby, 2011); 2 – online channel which allow 24/7 accessibility and wider product selection compared with the previous (Rigby, 2011); 3 – mobile channel which emerged from a need to provide further personalization and convenience to customers, Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson (2014) argue that smartphones have given the customers the ability to combine online and offline purchasing in a new way since there is immediate price comparison for customers; 4- catalogue channel which is a more old fashion channel in which the customer can order items via telephone or regular mail (Staflund & Kersmark, 2015).

For providing an understanding of how channels have evolved across the years, the channel evolution paradigm is described on the current chapter.

2.2.1. From single channels to Multi-channel era

At its inception probably the most popular channel would be the B&M which is defined as a channel in which customer demand at retail store is met with on-hand inventory from the bottom echelon (Tetteh & Xu, 2014). It is evident that to live in a single channel era, one would need to go back for a considerable amount of years and most important, customers would have a lower bargaining power. Though, B&M sustained their main advantage, proximity to clients, today's picture differs and customers are demanding the best of their retailers. In fact, that led retailers to transform their single channels' strategies into multi-channels' strategies.

2.2.2. The rise of Internet and Mobile channels

In early 21st century, retailers began the discussion of Multi-channel retailing (Chan, 2013). Multi-channel involves addressing customers throughout multiple channels, in which each channel has its specific purpose. According to Rangaswamy and Van Bruggen (2005), multi-channel strategy enables firms to build lasting customer relationships by simultaneously offering their customers and prospects information, products, services and support through two or more synchronized channels.

Considering the particularities of multi-channels strategies, one would say that the combination of B&M and catalogue were perhaps the first evidence of multi-channels strategies.

Internet shopping appeared in mid-1990s and as Kucuk and Krishnamurthy (2007) noted, the digital revolution was to customers, what the industrial revolution was to manufacturers, with a very significant redistribution of power in favour of the customers. In fact, since its appearance, the internet benefits were obvious: global reach, ease of access, enhanced interactivity, flexibility and speed, ability to communicate large amounts of information, scale cost efficiency and ease of maintenance (Jones & Vijayasathy, 1998; Varadarajan & Yadav, 2002).

And with the internet, it is important to highlight two different multi-channel situations. The retailer who had a B&M and then decided to open a digital channel through the internet and the retailer who was a pure-player and decided to open a B&M. The first, need to consider the high amount of sunk costs that he now needs to support while the second will have more flexibility when redefining its strategy, something that matters for the current panorama of retail (Ferne, Doherty, & Ellis-Chadwick, 2010).

Later, another breakthrough to retail context emerged with the appearance of the mobile channel. Mobile phones also appeared in mid-1990s, however, their exploitation regarding the excellence of channels' strategy is still a rather recent topic in retail history. The mobile channel is one of the most relevant to analyse regarding channels' strategies due to the fact that mobile devices are becoming ubiquitous (Lessin & Ante, 2013). Apple and Google app stores offer about 1.4 million apps combined. On average, customers spend about two hours a day on mobile apps, according to Gartner Inc. global app store revenue hit \$25 million in 2013.

Grant and O'Donohoe (2007) mention that the mobile phone is not only a personal device used to stay connected with friends and family, but an extension of personality and individuality. Due to the possibility of always connected platforms throughout the internet connection, retailers face a tremendous advantage that allow them to personalize offers according with a specific type of customer. Therefore, Persaud and Azhar (2012) argue that marketers must listen to their customers and develop appropriate strategies rather than simply adapting existing marketing strategies.

Mobile marketing is defined by Shankar, Venkatesh, Hofacker, and Naik (2010) as "the two-way or multi-way communication and promotion of an offer between a firm and its customers using a mobile medium, device or technology.

Cisco (2008) revealed that retailers differ in the use of mobile marketing practices. The study found that approximately 6% of retailers surveyed had web pages and a URL specifically designed for mobile use, approximately 42% of retailers offered their customers the ability to view product information on a mobile device through reformatted web pages or specific mobile pages; approximately 15% offered the ability to conduct transactions; approximately 10% used Short Messaging Services to provide information or to answer to customers' questions; and roughly 17% provided the capability to connect to communities of interest.

The opportunity for retailers is clear but the way retailers are adapting their strategies is different, therefore, marketers should carefully think of apps to enhance customers' experience, interconnected platforms, involving product mock-ups, e-wallets, personalized discounts/coupons. Furthermore, Shankar et al. (2010) mention that due to the time-sensitive and location-sensitive nature of the mobile medium and devices, mobile marketing has the potential to change the paradigm of retailing.

Increasingly, customers choose the times and the channels through which they deal with firms for different aspects of their interactions (Rangaswamy & Van Bruggen, 2005). They use different channels at different/same stages of their decision and shopping cycles.

2.2.3. Introducing the Omni-channel

To first look at Omni-channel strategies, the first issue to highlight is that the movement to Omni-channel retailing has heretofore not been conceptualized, despite its growing importance (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015). Nevertheless, Rigby (2011) believes that it reflects the fact that retailers are able to interact with customers through countless channels – websites, physical stores, kiosks, direct mail and catalogues, social media, mobile devices, gaming consoles, televisions, networked appliances, home services and more.

Simplifying, it proposes an integrated sales experience that combines the advantages of physical stores with the information-rich experience of online shopping. Moreover, the role of each channel ought to be re-imagined in order to maximize its current potential since the different channels become blurred as the natural borders between channels begin to disappear (Verhoef et al., 2015). Customers have now the opportunity to order from anywhere (call centre, website, B&M store, catalogues, mobile, social media) and fulfil from anywhere (ecommerce DC, outlet locations, B&M stores, Retail DC, Pop up stores, kiosk, others distribution channels).

One concept that came up with Omni-channel strategies is the clicks-and-mortar (Ferne et al., 2010) which tend to present the complementarity between online and offline channels, offering customers the possibility of first searching for information and buying the product online and then collecting it in the store or other agreed place. Another aspect that is often associated with the addition of the digital channel is the possible strategic and financial possible improvements associated with the digital channel introduction (Wolk & Skiera, 2009).

Gartner predicts that 80% of Omni-channel implementations will fail because of siloed approaches and channel centric strategies that will turn customers off, with inevitable negative impact on loyalty and sales. According to Accenture (2013), these siloed appraisals will require a transformation of retailers' channel operations, particularly in retail stores. Moreover, 31% of retail Leaders and 21% of retail Followers are developing Omni-Channel marketing plans, according to Aberdeen (2012).

As a matter of fact, the improvement of both online and mobile channel has potentiated the internet of things. With it, three different types of interaction could be pointed: (1) providing a new way to do something people already do (e.g. new channel=new habit); (2) providing a more convenient or automatic way to do something people need to do but don't necessarily want to do (e.g. substitute a channel); (3) providing the ability to do something customers couldn't do before (e.g. try products online). This revolutionary process partially explains why retail is changing but it certainly brings new threats and opportunities for retailers.

Due to matters of misperception and to highlight the main differences between multi-channel and Omni-channel strategies, table 4 differentiates both strategies according to: channel focus, channel scope, separation of channels, brand vs. channel customer relationship focus and channel management objectives.

Table 4 - Multi-channel vs. Omni-channel Management (Verhoef et al., 2015)

	Multi-channel Management	Omni-channel Management
Channel focus	Interactive channels only	Interactive and mass-communication channels

Channel scope	Retail channels: store, online, website, and direct marketing (catalogue)	Retail channels: store, online, and direct marketing, mobile channels (i.e. smart phones, tablets, apps), social media Customer Touch points (incl. Mass communication channels: TV, Radio, Print, C2C, etc.)
Separation of channels	Separate channels with no overlap	Integrated channels providing seamless retail experiences
Brand vs. Channel customer relationship focus	Customer - Retail channel focus	Customer - Retail channel - Brand focus
Channel Management Objectives	Per channel Channel objectives (i.e. sales per channel; experience per channel)	Cross-channel objectives (i.e. overall retail customer experience, total sales over channels)

Considering the importance of this type of strategies for retailers, it is important to look at the numerical side of the question. IDC Retail Insights pointed that multi-channel shopper will spend, on average, 15% to 30% more than the single channel shopper while, and Omni-channel shoppers outspend multi-channel shoppers by over 20%. Though, most organizations are not in a good position to achieve Omni-channel customer management because they lack both technologies and required multi-disciplined approaches (Staflund & Kersmark, 2015).

Customers tend not to offer second chances to retailers who fail to perform their channels' strategies and concerning an even higher claim for better channels' strategies, the urge to Omni-channel strategies is evident (Strang, 2013).

Omni-channel is continuing with its growth and exploitation, social networking and increasing power of electronic intermediaries are issues that Fernie et al. (2010) point to be in discussion concerning channels' strategies. However, to whom the power shift will turn, it is still undefined.

With Internet of Things, products and customers are connected 24/7. Therefore, customers expect 24/7 availability when their needs demand it (Rigby, 2011).

Finally and to clarify Omni-channel initiatives (Staflund & Kersmark, 2015), it is relevant to discuss the areas related to Omni-channel spans over all different functions involved in the retailers business activities. For instance, shipping, services, logistics, sales, tools, promotional activities and performance measurements, etc. (Brynjolfsson, Hu, & Rahman, 2013; Gallino & Moreno, 2014). Examples of shipping services and logistics integrations are click-and-collect, in-store returns and in-store packaging of click-and-collect orders (Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014). Omni-channel sales tools include the use of technology such as tablets and in-store screens (Herhausen, Binder, Schoegel, & Herrmann, 2015). Omni-channel promotion is related to provision consistent information to facilitate and encourage combined channel use (Oh, Teo, & Sambamurthy, 2012). Finally, performance measurements related to Omni-channel initiatives involve finding ways to measure the results generated by this strategy (Cook, 2014).

Table 5 summarizes the main concepts of Omni-channel strategies.

Table 5 - Synthesis of the most relevant definitions of the dissertation

Omni-Channel strategies	Definition	Authors
Omni-Channel	The defining characteristic of Omni-channel is the assumption that any given customer will evaluate the product-of-interest at several different points before making their final purchase.	(Dorman, 2013)
	The next stage of the evolution, from a single channel to a complete and holistic experience that merges these various touch points.	(Harris, 2012)
	Online and offline channels differ in their ability to deliver information and product fulfillment, which are the two most critical channel functions. An Omni-channel retailer can therefore respond to and cater to consumer heterogeneity in preferences for both.	(Gallino & Moreno, 2014)
Multi-Channel	Consumers are now using a variety of channels in their shopping experience, in order to research their purchases and choose them before committing to buying.	(Kaye & Johnson, 2002)
	Refers to the integration of various channels in the consumer decision-making process. The term was coined in early 2000s to signify the integration of offline and online shopping channels. It has since evolved to encompass the proliferating number of channels and media used to formulate, evaluate and execute buying decisions.	(Dholakia et al., 2010)
Mobile Marketing	The two-way or multi-way communication and promotion of an offer between a firm and its customers using a mobile medium, device or technology	(Shankar et al., 2010)

2.3. Literature Regarding Omni-Channel Strategies

Despite Omni-channel strategies are still in its early ages, the literature on Omni-channel strategies can be segmented into III streams. The (I) first stream focused on customer dynamics and their demand for Omni-Channel strategies. The (II) second stream is concerned to announce Omni-Channel as the new paradigm of retail business perspective. The (III) third stream comprises strategic dynamics that retailers pursue in order to deliver a seamless shopping experience.

2.3.1. Customers Dynamics and their demand for Omni-Channel Strategies

Customers now seek to access a flow of seamless shopping journeys which enables the customer to buy in different touch points connected in an ecosystem. Customers expect the same brand experience across all channels, including mobile. Furthermore, Berry et al. (2010) argue that due to the power shift from retailers to customers, retailers are persuaded to adopt demand-driven innovations based on customers' needs which could be transformed in their desire to be served throughout multiple channels.

Verhoef et al. (2009) were among the first to examine the creation of a customer experience from a holistic perspective in which they have presented a conceptual model to discuss the social environment, the service interface, the retail atmosphere, the assortment, the price and promotions as determinants of customer experience, including customer experience management strategies. Later, Dholakia et al. (2010) investigated the channels, marketers and customers dimensions and concluded that deciding which specific channels to use to reach their customers. Additionally, they also look at how to profitably coordinate their chosen channel assortment for formulated customer behaviour research reflecting the challenge of shifting customers to migrate from higher cost, lower valued channels to lower cost, higher valued ones and managing changing customer preferences across channels were key points in managing a multi-channel, multimedia retailing environment. Furthermore, they have also stated the way retailers address this trend is different, since some are seeking to manage the channel behaviour (e.g. Walmart, Best Buy), while others appear to adopt a more passive stance (e.g., Burberry, True Religion Jeans) which the authors mentioned to have some indexed risks.

Pauwels, Leeflang, Teerling, and Huizingh (2011) found that online evaluations may drive overall retailer choice, despite the unique value proposition of each channel. Gonzalez, Huré, and Picot-Coupey (2013) stated that there are evolutions in shopping behaviours, such as the increase or decrease of the frequency of visit to existing touch points, under the influence of mobile applications usages that correspond to the emergence of an Omni-channel experience. More recently, Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson (2014) mentioned that today's customers are no longer satisfied by retailers who are operating isolated sales channels but rather expect a highly integrated shopping experience where they can combine the different channels according to their preferences.

2.3.2. Introducing Omni-Channel as the new paradigm of retail businesses

Despite the early maturity stage of channels' strategies within retail at the beginning of 20th century, Urbany et al. (2000) argued that reporting category or brand sales by customer patronage status (i.e. primary/ loyal customer vs. multi-store shopper) would provide significant insight on retail. This sort of argument, led to further explorations within retail literature, including challenges and opportunities and more detailed studies regarding the topic.

Berry et al. (2010), Neslin et al. (2006) Urbany et al. (2000), Zhang et al. (2010), discussed some of the challenges and opportunities that retailers face when facing the transition towards Omni-Organizational structure. Employees' training overbuilt retail space, data integration, evaluation and performance metrics, coordinating channel strategies are presented as challenges, while cross-channel customer communication and promotions, channel purposes and interactions cross-channel price comparisons, digitization are presented as opportunities.

Ailawadi and Keller (2004) and Kwon and Lennon (2009) found that valuable brand associations attributed to one channel and positive associations formed by the knowledge of one channel are likely to transfer to other channels by way of a halo effect.

Harris (2012) presents Omni-Channel as the final step of the evolution, from a single channel to a complete and holistic experience that merges these various touch points reflecting other authors' perception and information. Dorman (2013), Gallino and Moreno (2014) state that the defining characteristic of Omni-channel is the assumption that any given customer will evaluate the product-of-interest at several different points before making their final purchase (assessed the effects of implementing a BOPS "Buy-online, pick-up-in-store" project in the USA while analysing cross-selling and channel-shift effects reached the conclusions that the implementation allowed to lower online sales, higher store sales and higher store traffic.

Emrich, Paul, and Rudolph (2015) examined the relative effect of overlapping assortments across a retailer's online and offline channels. After considering no integration of channels, full integration and asymmetrical integration, they found that full integration dominates no integration, but full integration is not always superior to asymmetrical integration. These findings show that an Omni-channel retailer does not necessarily have to operate all channels and more importantly the optimal retail mix across channels vary from retail to retailer. However, as availability is core

to Omni-channel retailing it is important for the retailer to be present in the channel that its customers would like to use (Staflund & Kersmark, 2015).

2.3.3. Retailers' strategic dynamics to deliver a seamless shopping experience

Rosenblum and Kilcourse (2013) argued that blending gradually the digital and physical selling would lead to one compelling seamless customer experience remains the manufacturer/ retailer biggest challenge. This challenge could be solved by retailers operating Omni-channel strategies (Tetteh & Xu, 2014). Punj (2012) proposed a conceptual model through the triangulation of multiple data sources that allowed to conclude that electronic devices allow users to take better decisions and to identify information-processing strategies. Wollenburg, Hübner, and Kuhn (2014) presented a non-specific conceptual framework for order fulfilment and delivery in online grocery retailing which has been tested by the largest European online grocery and has proven to facilitate the process. In addition, they have also addressed some aspects of the recommended Omni-channel landscape in grocery which should include channel interaction, channel integration layers, enterprise business service layer and common business applications as enablers of the whole process.

Regarding the strategic dynamics of Omni-channel, an analysis of the newest organizational propositions that retailers are offering was made. One interesting approach is the inventory showrooming which are mentioned and analysed by Gallino and Moreno (2014) considering the case of WarbyParker.com, a leading US fashion eyewear brand in which customers use the offline store to see the product, showrooms, and make the purchase online through the company website. Another approach to physical stores is the boutique, in which the retailer understood that it was a major touch point with the customer and tried to create the seamless experience to get customers to the stores. Apple, Adidas and other top brands have already followed this trend. At the same time, Amazon's announcement of its first brick and mortar store opening on Manhattan's 34th Street² highlights the current Omni-channel importance. Therefore, the trend is evident, internet retailers are getting physical while physical retailers are getting online throughout a combination of channels to deliver a value added offering.

Table 6 summarizes the main studies previously indicated throughout the literature review regarding Omni-channel.

² (<http://www.theverge.com/2014/10/9/6953083/amazon-is-about-to-open-its-first-ever-physical-store-in-new-york-ancity> accessed October 13, 2014)

Table 6 - Summary of similar studies that were analysed

Omni-Channel Strategies	Analyzed Variables /Frameworks/ Theories	Determinants	Authors/ Studies
Consumer behaviors	Consumer decision making on the web: A theoretical analysis and research guidelines	Time costs, cognitive costs, perceive risk, product knowledge, information filtration strategy, digital attributes, perceptual cues, affective influences, trust	(Punj, 2012)
	Opportunities for innovation in the delivery of interactive retail services	Increasing power of consumers, channel synergies, optimal use of resources, consumer heterogeneity,	(Berry et al., 2010)
	Consumer behavior in a multichannel, multimedia retailing environment	Consumer-centric view of multichannel, multimedia retailing, dimensions and environment	(Dholakia et al., 2010)
Mobile Marketing	Mobile Marketing based on a retailers and consumers perspective	Drivers of mobile device/ service adoption, the influence of mobile marketing on customer decision-making	(Shankar et al., 2010)
	Mobile application as an additional touchpoint to enrich customers and retailers' relationship	Smartphone use, mobile applications use, five preferred mobile applications, satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the mobile apps, changes in the consumer behavior	(Gonzalez et al., 2013)
	Mobile Technology Adoption	Functional value, Social Value - being relevant to "you", Creative value, emotional value	(Bolat, 2014)
Retailers' strategies	Holistic Logistics planning Framework for online grocery retailing	Parameters in online retailing to develop a conceptual framework, factors that play a role for choosing a specific order fulfillment, retailers' actions	(Wollenburg et al., 2014)
	Impact of introducing inventory showrooms for retailers (demand and supply sides)	Omni-channel environments are becoming ubiquitous, product returns, impact of adding/ removing channels	(Bell, Gallino, & Moreno, 2013)
	Integration of online and offline channels in retail	Online sales, store sales, traffic. Cross-channel synergies and dissynergies. Channel shift patterns	(Gallino & Moreno, 2014)

Omni-Channel Retailing Strategies should be divided into three different streams. Concerning our research, it was proved that there is significant data to cover the two first streams but there is still a gap to provide an understanding of the current state channels strategies within retail. Herhausen et al. (2015) point out that although conventional wisdom holds that channel integration influences overall bottom-line outcomes, limited published evidence supports this notion – particularly regarding different channels. Furthermore, Verhoef et al. (2015) argue that the retail mix across channels is probably the least developed within the multi-channel field, due to the limited data availability of retail mix instruments across channels.

Despite the announced advantages for implementing Omni-channel strategies, there are also various reasons to why some retailers are hesitant towards the implementation of an Omni-channel. The online channel for instance differs in many aspects from the offline channel in terms of logistics, customer behaviour, return policies and service expectation (Kaye & Johnson, 2002). Additionally, the high costs and effort of changing processes and investing in new technology are another factor of concern (Herhausen et al., 2015). Another negative aspect are the internal conflicts that can occur when the goals of the different channels are incompatible (Agatz et al., 2008). As conclusion, not only is the integration an operationally and organizationally complex task but some retailers simply lack the willingness to provide these types of services to their customers (Herhausen et al., 2015).

3. Empirical study

3.1. Research topic

The aim of this project is to gather a better understanding of the current state of channels' strategies in B2C markets within Portugal. Having the possibility of studying customers or retailers' perspective, the latter were target because of the early stage of the Omni-channel within Portugal. The latest aspect could reflect customers' lack of knowledge and in that sense while targeting retail experts it would be possible to have more interesting conclusions.

To reach a structured answer to the research question, a set of steps were pursued as described in figure 2.

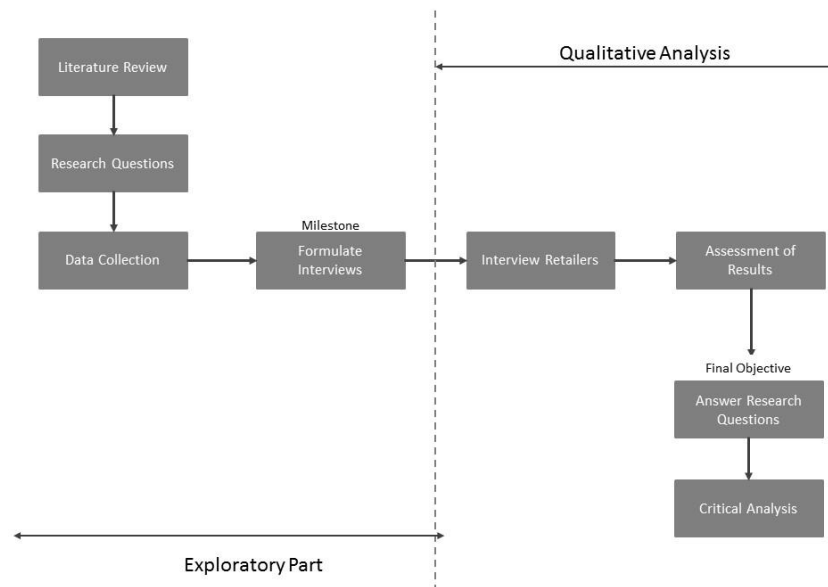


Figure 2 – Research route (source: authors' compilation)

For illustrative purposes, those set of steps could be divided into 2 parts: exploratory and qualitative. The first part involved the literature review, the definition of the research question and the data collection. Despite the literature review could be characterized as an iterative process, as during the whole project further aspects become relevant and need to be analysed, it was decided to set this step within the first part because of the proportion of effort allocated.

Having concluded the previous step, a reflection was needed in order to define the most suitable methodology to pursue our research intentions. The following section gives a detailed overview of the qualitative methodology performed.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Qualitative study

Creswell (2010) presented three distinct investigation project types: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach. For selecting the right methodology, a couple of different studies were considered as benchmarks (Table 3). From the review, despite most studies followed a quantitative approach, we have investigated their findings which induced the adoption of a qualitative methodology. According to Bardin (1977), qualitative analysis corresponds to a more intuitive process which is also more flexible and adaptable, while encompassing certain characteristics that are recommendable for a study like this one.

Table 7 - Summary of methodological appraisals concerning Omni-Channel (source: authors' compilation)

Methodology	Country	Industry	Sample size	Authors
Qualitative	USA	High-end apparel, accessories and home furnishings	1 retailer	(Avery, Steenburgh, Deighton, & Caravella, 2012)
Quantitative	USA	Several	Database	(Bell et al., 2013)
Qualitative	UK	N/A	28 Managers	(Bolat, 2014)
Quantitative	USA	N/A	1 retailer	(Gallino & Moreno, 2014) Gallino & Moreno, 2014)
Qualitative	France	N.A	Face-to-Face 30 semi-structured Interviews	(Gonzalez et al., 2013)
Quantitative	USA	Several	103 respondents	(Rosenblum & Kilcourse, 2013)
Quantitative (survey)	The Netherlands	Several	364 customers	(Neslin et al., 2006)
Quantitative	Taiwan	N/A	102 respondents	(Lin, 2012)
Quantitative	Canada	N/A	428 respondents	(Persaud & Azhar, 2012)
Quantitative (survey)	N.A.	Grocery	92 managers + 422 consumers	(Urbany et al., 2000)
Quantitative	USA	N/A	237 respondents	(White et al., 2013)

Anderson (1983) pointed out that there is no best method and it is not appropriate to seek for the evaluation of marketing phenomena. Carson, Gilmore, Perry, and Gronhaug (2001) mention that theory building encompasses a study which purpose is to seek out meaning and understanding of the phenomena. So theory building is positioned under interpretivism/ relativism.

For the present dissertation's purpose, the main aim of this methodological approach consists of gaining an in-depth understanding of a situation. Patton (1980) states that in-depth understanding is based on researcher immersion in the phenomena to be studied, gathering data which provide a detailed description of events, situations and interaction between people, things, providing depth and detail.

3.2.2. Research approach

Considering the qualitative methodologies, interviews were chosen as the most suitable method to gather retailers' impression on the current state of channels' strategies within Portuguese retail. Ruquoy (1997) argues that interviews are the most accurate method to explore someone's thinking, without leaving the context of the study.

The interviews were semi-structured to enable both flexibility and relevance and made face-to-face in order to ensure a spontaneous contact with retailers and to enable the hypothesis of taking notes during the recording process (Opdenakker, 2006). Whatever an interview's form, Patton (1990) defends that its purpose is to get inside someone's head and enter into their perspective. Therefore, retailers' opinion was transposed into paper for enabling the formulation of scientific knowledge.

Semi-structured interviews with a prepared questioning guide (table 8) were conducted to ensure flexibility while gathering relevant information (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The guide had four main topics: I. Retail and channel strategy; II. Omni-channel origins; III. Omni-channel outcomes and IV. Omni-channel development. According to the specificity of the interviews and to how a certain conversation evolves, the questions' order might differ and some new questions may be asked.

The interviews followed a localist position, which could be described as an empirical situation that can be studied, guided with a positive and unconditional attitude as proposed by Rogers, Cacioppo, and Petty (1983).

Table 8 - Interview guide

Literature Review Discussion Topic	Theories/ Authors	Questions
<p>I.</p> <p>Retail and channel strategy – Assess the environment, trends and what can make the difference within the business environment.</p> <p>- Business Strategy</p>	<p>Porter (1991) characterized a business environment with its Porter 5 Forces</p> <p>Zeithaml, “Rajan” Varadarajan, and Zeithaml (1988) moderating factors to measure business strategies’ effectiveness</p> <p>eMarketer (2014) characterized Retail environment</p>	<p>1. How would you characterize retail business environment?</p> <p>2. What distinguish leaders and followers in terms of channels’ strategies?</p> <p>3. How do you characterize the current retail situation in Portugal? Are there local particularities? Opportunities? Threats?</p>
<p>II.</p> <p>Omni-channel origins. Challenges, opportunities, questions to answer</p> <p>- Retailers’ current use</p>	<p>Rigby (2011) introducing Omni-Channel</p> <p>Challenges: Chan (2013) points Organizational change and technology; Organizational barriers;</p> <p>Opportunities: Rohm and Milne (2003) internet channel; Bolat (2014) mobile channel;</p>	<p>1. How would you define Omni-channel strategies?</p> <p>2. To what extent, customers are asking for Omni-channel solutions?</p> <p>3. How do you potentiate each of your channels?</p> <p>4. How does the brand choice process differ by channel, and the channel choice process differ by brand?</p>

	<p>Verhoef et al. (2015) brand role, shopper behaviour across channels, effects of different marketing mix instruments across channels,</p>	<p>5. Are you integrating different channels? How? Does the type of information vary across channel?</p> <p>6. Which is the role of the brand in enabling this integration?</p> <p>7. How should manufacturers allocate funds between brand and channel development?</p> <p>8. Which is the associated investment per channel?</p> <p>9. If you start from scratch, how would you establish your channel strategy?</p> <p>10. Overall, what have been the current threats? Do they persist in future or others will become important?</p>
<p>III. Omni-channel outcomes - Strategies' outputs</p>	<p>(Avery et al., 2012); Cao and Li (2015) - Sales growth;</p> <p>Herhausen et al. (2015)- Service quality; channels' synergies</p> <p>White et al. (2013) - Brand Equity;</p>	<p>1. Are channels and brands in power conflict and how does that impact brand/ channel choice?</p> <p>2. Which is the expected return of your channel strategy?</p> <p>3. Is it vital for profit? What are the outcomes of your channel strategy? In general? For marketing? Loyalty of</p>

	Herhausen et al. (2015) Lin (2012) - Loyalty	your customers? Stock efficiency?
IV. Omni-channel development - Future Expectations	EY (2015), PwC (2015), KPMG (2013), , BCG (2012), McKinsey&Company (2012), Deloitte (2011)	1. How do you imagine your channels' strategy in 5 years? Why? 2. Which are the trends that would have greater impact in your business? Why? 3. Which is your perception regarding the maturity level of Omni-channel strategies in Portugal against leaders? Which are the explaining factors that sustain those differences?

3.2.3. Operationalization of the qualitative methodology

With the B2C as the scope of the current project, it is relevant to highlight the criteria to select the interviewees and how the appraisal has started.

Since our study depended on interviewees' availability, special attention to their lack of time was aimed while providing any initial e-mail, telephone call with quality assured. For initiating the contact, Rowley (2012) detailed guidelines were followed:

- Authors' description and clarification of the reason for having established contact.
- Brief explanation of the research and topics that would be covered in the interview.
- Clarification of the amount of time that the interview will take.
- Ask for permission to record the interview, while assuring confidentiality.
- Provide personal contacts and ask about their availability to schedule interview.

For gathering the interviewees, the process focused mostly on 1st and 2nd degree contacts. Furthermore, direct e-mail contact to industry experts, marketing managers and professors to collect either interviewees or references to interviewees were also relevant actions in this process.

Given the diverse geographic location of the interviewees, some interviews were conducted in person and others were conducted through Skype with video enabled. All 12 interviews were conducted by the first author between January 2015 and July 2015. On average, interviews lasted 50 minutes, and the minimum length was 40 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and sent to the interviewees for allowing them to confirm, add or remove any information according to their preference. Table 8 summarize interviewees' characteristics that were relevant to our analysis.

Table 9 - Interviewees' detail summary (source: authors' elaboration)

	Date	Retail Segment	Job position	Age group
Retailer 1	26/1/2015	Apparel	Ecommerce Manager	[40 - 55]
Retailer 2	27/3/2015	Grocery	Ecommerce Manager	[25 - 39]
Retailer 3	13/5/2015	Grocery	Marketing Intelligence Manager	[25 - 39]
Retailer 4	14/5/2015	Apparel	Distribution and Product Manager	[25 - 39]
Retailer 5	28/4/2015	Grocery	Distribution and Product Manager	[40 - 55]
Retailer 6	4/5/2015	Books & Media	Marketing Director	[40 - 55]
Retailer 7	11/5/2015	Grocery	Marketing Intelligence Manager	[40 - 55]
Retailer 8	20/5/2015	Apparel	CEO	[40 - 55]
Retailer 9	21/5/2015	Apparel	Ecommerce Manager	[25 - 39]
Retailer 10	3/6/2015	Apparel	Marketing Director	[40 - 55]
Retailer 11	9/6/2015	Books & Media	Ecommerce Manager	[25 - 39]
Retailer 12	6/7/2015	Apparel	Ecommerce Manager	[25 - 39]

3.2.4. Data gathering

The twelve interviews were integrally transcribed and transcripts were imported to QSR NVivo 10. Afterwards, data was subject to a categorical and thematic analysis (Bardin, 1977) for allowing an understanding of the unstructured data, following a three-step process.

Firstly, and to ensure a reliable analysis, an initial hierarchical list of nodes were created as guided by the literature and interview questions, following the guidelines of the interviews, presented in table 8. Secondly, emerging themes were coded into other nodes and sub-nodes, which were added and refined through iterative reading.

Finally, the last step involved data examination and interpretation, resulting in final re-coding and minor refinements. In this stage, the conclusions were arranged by topics and we have allocated them into a sound structure to answer the research question.

3.3. Main Findings

The current state of channels' strategies ought to be characterized into two main topics. The first topic includes research findings on the Portuguese retail context that differentiate Portugal from other markets which influence the second topic, the Portuguese channels' strategies, expressed by retailers' opinion on Omni-channel or Multi-channel solutions.

In this section, a structured way of providing scientific knowledge on the Portuguese channels' strategies is provided. It encompasses an analysis of retailers' opinion while presenting summary tables with results of the data analysis and/ or illustrative quotes.

3.3.1. Portuguese retail context

Portuguese geographic characteristics are likely to influence how retailers operate and the expectations of surroundings customers. Retailers described Portugal as:

« [...] *a small and coastal country* [...] » (Retailer 3)

« *Considerable disparity of population density across regions* » (Retailer 2)

Customers understand the territorial differences of Portugal and their expectations in terms of service delivery tend to be adjusted to one's reality. For instance, a certain customer who lives on the coast will have higher provision expectation than someone who lives in the interior or Portuguese islands. Not only do customers understand this sort of differences, but also retailers expect this understanding when serving Portuguese customers.

Legal issues also play an important role and for instance, there are:

« [...] *broader buying periods with dilated schedules* » (Retailer 5).

While in Portugal it is common to have stores open on Sundays which allowed retailers to a diversified use of formats in distinct schedules, while other countries tend to close stores on Sundays. The previous has a direct impact on retailers' expectations while influencing the Portuguese customers buying habits. This aspect could be somehow related with the fewer propensities to online consumption by the Portuguese which leads to keeping B&M open for longer hours.

Retailers also noted that:

« [...] crisis led to a distinct appraisal with the customer [...] » (Retailer 8)

For instance, the price factor increased its overall importance, especially in durable goods such as tablets and computers.

3.3.2. Portuguese retail maturity

Portuguese specificities influenced the degree to which channels' strategies recently evolved. When comparing the Portuguese maturity with retail leading countries, Portugal is less mature, especially if the online channel is taken into account. Table 10 summarizes the data analysis performed on retailers' interviewees regarding Portuguese maturity.

Table 10 – Results of the data analysis to Portuguese retail maturity

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
PORTUGUESE RETAIL MATURITY LEVEL	7	31
Over 5 years late to retail leading countries	5	8
Portugal is technologically ready to OC growth	2	2
Portuguese customers are less informed	1	2
Slower growth rate	5	19
Economic crisis	1	1
Few players in the online channel	3	9
Portuguese risk taking culture	3	4
Retail structures	1	1
Technological barriers	3	3

Results suggest that the gap to leading countries has risen from the lack of players operating in the online channel, compiling it as the most often mentioned node.

«Portugal has few players in the online channel and that is the biggest gap. (...) We buy a lot of tourism through the online channel because there are Booking.com, TripAdvisor, etc. There are international organizations that enable the market and that is fundamental» (Retailer 8)

The misperception of online channel metrics and the low digitalization level of Portuguese small and medium enterprises (SME) which is somewhat related with the previous, highlight the importance of further investment in the online channel.

«The entrance of pure players in the market, shrinking price and margin which will lead to a drop in the profitability of the sector» (Retailer 6)

Other important aspects that suggest a slower growth rate of Portugal are the risk taking culture of the Portuguese and the technological barriers that are faced in the market, for instance with the payment methods and which is related with less informed customers.

3.3.3. Leaders and followers in the Portuguese market

The perception of leader and follower behaviours often changes with the culture. In that sense and as part of the Portuguese retail context, table 11 summarizes the main differences of a leader and a follower in terms of channels' strategies.

Table 11 – Results of the data analysis to the differences between leaders and followers

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
LEADER Vs. FOLLOWER	12	38
Brand scale and notoriety	2	2
Define concepts and trends	7	11
Experience across channels	5	8
Internal adaptation	2	10
Online development	1	3
Provision timing	4	4

When looking in detail to the channels' strategies, all interviewees made references to the differences between a leader and a follower. In particular, brand notoriety and innovation associated with the right channel strategy potentiality (experience across channels, internal adaptation, online capacity and provision timing) are suggested to distinct a leader from a follower.

«Leaders are those that are not just able to identify its own place in the industry but more importantly have the capacity to sustain that relevance [...] » (Retailer 9)

Leaders are also those that consider current threats when designing their strategy. In that sense, table 12 summarizes research findings on the current threats of the Portuguese market.

Table 12 – Results of the data analysis to the current threats to Omni-channel implementations

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
CURRENT THREATS	11	60
Degree of readiness to new channels	10	32
Lack of integration between channels	7	14
Misperception of Omni-channel advantages and disadvantages	3	3
Pure players threatening existing players	5	11

Regarding the current threats to retail players, eleven out of the twelve interviewees produced sixty references. The node “degree of readiness to new channels” was the most frequently mentioned with thirty two references of ten sources.

The lack of integration between channels and the fact that pure players are threatening existing players were other aspects that retailers mentioned. Those factors are relevant for both leaders and followers to analyse when defining their strategy.

3.3.4. Portuguese channels’ strategies

Retailers were interviewed on the definition of an Omni-channel strategy. The results of the data analysis to this topic are summarized in table 13.

Table 13 – Results of the data analysis to Omni-channel definition

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
OMNI-CHANNEL CHARACTERISTICS & GOALS	10	52
Coherent and complementary multiple channels	8	26
Drifts from online growth	1	1
Efficient supply chain and stock management	2	3
Multiple channels for delivering the product	5	9
Unique experience for customers	8	13

As presented in table 13, ten out of the twelve interviewees presented relevant points on this matter, generating a total of 52 references. The node “coherent and complementary multiple channels” is the most mentioned with 26 references of by 8 interviewees, with 26 references.

Retailers pointed that they are still not performing true Omni-channel strategies and in some cases it is better to perform Multi or Cross-channel strategies.

«At this moment we still are not in an Omni-channel status and maybe the status that better illustrate the Portuguese channels’ strategies is the cross-channel, in the sense that we are between the Multi-channel and Omni-channel and there are some synergies between our channels»
(Retailer 11)

«We talk about Omni-channel strategies but brands are not Omni-channel in their appraisal»
(Retailer 10)

Due to the entrance of pure players in the market, margins are shrinking and the need for retailers to address innovative solutions is higher.

«The entrance of a pure player such as Amazon can promote some disruption in the market and that is, undoubtedly, a threat. In that sense, the Omni-channel strategy increasingly appears as a priority for us, because it enables differentiation» (Retailer 6)

Portuguese interviewees also recognized the importance of coherence, complementarity, efficiency and experience. However, the fact that a considerable amount of retailers mentioned that Omni-channel is part of having multiple channels, including the online for delivering the product also indicates that Portuguese retailers understand that for reaching Omni-channel, first they should diversify formats and deliver products in all channels that matter for customers.

«An Omni-channel strategy has everything oriented to the customer and to provide him/ her a unique experience» (Retailer 9)

When the seamless experience is offered to customers, aspect that was pointed by 8 interviewees, retailers’ stock management and distribution chain tends to achieve further effectiveness

«Omni-channel is related with distribution chain and stock management efficiency» (Retailer 9)

Digging deeper on Omni-channel strategies, retailers’ opinion was investigated on their channel integration as presented in table 14.

Table 14 – Results of the data analysis to channel integration

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
CHANNEL INTEGRATION	11	40
Change of information	9	11
Coherence of strategies across channels	8	16
Cross-channel potentiation	2	3
Data integration	4	9

The change of information was the most discussed topic. While some retailers argued that changes were normal, others were trying to keep their channels with the same offering and information.

«The product and the price is the same online and offline» (Retailer 3)

«There is a differentiation of range and price between the two channels» (Retailer 10)

The coherence of strategies and the ability to integrate data are seen as a major source of retailers' competitive advantage. It not only helps retailers to become more agile from inside but it also enables them to more sophisticated customer oriented offerings.

«It is possible to understand profiles, which enlarge the leverage to operationalize another retail trend, which is the personalization logic» (Retailer 6)

3.3.5. Portuguese Omni-channel customers

Omni-channel is part of a customer-centric appraisal to customers. In fact, customers are asking for integrated and technological service providing and their expectations are likely not to be met if retailers do not evolve their channel strategy. Customers' loyalty is decreasing and this could be presented as an argument to increase customer-centric appraisals. Table 15 summarizes the degree to which customers are asking for Omni-channel solutions.

Table 15 – Results of the data analysis to Omni-channel customers

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
OMNI-CHANNEL CUSTOMERS	12	56
Customer behaviours	11	32
Increasing complaints and requirements	2	2
Technology and Online	11	30

Customer expectations	9	24
Access online offering	4	6
Coherence between channels and according with events	4	7
Customers seek freedom and convenience	5	7
Personalization	4	4

All interviewees (12) have addressed relevant impressions on this view, producing a total of 56 references. In an attempt to adapt to the current state, retailers are looking forward to meeting customer expectations through investing in in-store experience, personalized promotions through location, data tracking solutions and cross-selling initiatives such as the wear it with.

«There is also more segmentation message situations related with geolocation. You enter a certain geographic area and you get a message for having a certain profile, not receiving it if you did not match certain characteristics» (Retailer 10)

«I can potentiate the wear it with. For instance, a customer bought a necklace. If I offer her a pair of earrings matching with the necklace, maybe I can potentiate cross-selling» (Retailer 9)

Another important element of channels' strategy is the brand. Indeed, brand is thought to provide further consistency and recognition to the whole strategy.

«Brand is fundamental because it is what gives consistency to the strategy and it reflects the market positioning in the different formats» (Retailer 5)

Nevertheless, findings suggest that brands need to prove their valences when entering in a new channel.

«Amazon is a brand that was born online. In the physical world it has still to prove that the valences for what it is recognized are also present in the physical store» (Retailer 10)

In terms of funds' allocation and roadmap to an Omni-channel strategy, it is evident that there is not a magic recipe to successfully operate an Omni-channel strategy. Retailers should be conscious that the Omni-channel project is unique and resources should enable a holistic strategy. In addition, analytics should be well implemented and that will influence the success level.

«It depends on the objectives that companies have» (Retailer 7)

Further attention should be driven into segments and types of customers that retailers are dealing with. Retail is evolving to specialization and niche concepts and sometimes it is crucial to have in mind that it might be better to concentrate in less but more profitable costumers who will increase their spending with the right appraisal.

«We think that retail market has still niches, having room for innovation and add value. Perhaps it will emerge from new products and services» (Retailer 6)

Findings suggest that retailers ought to consider the degree to which their channels and brand may become in conflict and the perceived impact on customers' buying intention. In fact, they should manage their strategy labels to evade it.

«If the first layer of the company's strategy is brand, there will not be a conflict between brand and channels» (Retailer 6)

Despite the fact that in Portugal there are still no Omni-channel strategies, it is relevant to start analysing the data and impacts of the current channel strategies living a transition period.

«It should be possible to control the initiatives and an analytics layer should be associated and integrated» (Retailer 5)

In that sense, channels could work as levers (loyalty, retention, engagement) to promote the whole channel strategy and increase customers' loyalty. However, it should be seen as a long-term investment.

«One client, multiple channels and we pull levers in each of the channels» (Retailer 2)

«This is a long-term investment and therefore it needs to be well done and asks for practice» (Retailer 5)

3.3.6. The future of Omni-channel strategies

Considering the future of Omni-channel and how this transitional stage is evolving, retailers' opinion was accessed on which were the most important trends that they would highlight.

Table 16 – Results of the data analysis to most important trends regarding retail

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
MOST IMPORTANT TRENDS	12	120
Industry	10	58

Emergence of B2C opportunities to B2B players	1	1
Increase level of collaboration	2	10
More rational stores' openings	8	23
Online channel growth	8	21
Stable retail growth	3	3
Retailers	12	62
Channels' integration	8	17
Future of retail stores	8	17
Retail is evolving to specialization concepts	5	8
Service diversification and personalization	4	8
Technological savvy retailers	4	12

As table 16 presents, we have gathered a total of 120 references of 12 interviewees. Their opinions were then divided into 2 nodes depending on their characteristics: industry and retailers.

On the industry node, retailers are in accordance in terms of the need to more rational stores' openings. Not only have they pointed that further criteria will be considered when tackling a new market/ segment, they expect that customers' will look more often to convenience and proximity may be more important.

«It is a route of getting a closer relationship but freezing new stores' opening» (Retailer 5)

While retailers still consider crisis' impacts on their business, they believe that in the future transactions will be more often online and even analysts point online sales percentage as a criteria for their business valuations. At the same time, offline is thought to evolve to more humanized appraisals to customers, highlighting the need for technological savvy retailers, such as wearable technologies related with internet of things. Furthermore, perceptions' on increasing level of collaboration were mentioned.

3.4. Discussion

The advent of change within retail industry is far from being stagnated (Verhoef et al., 2015). Channels' strategies with the impact of both online and mobile channels ask for changes/ refinements to business models ought to be considered and reconsidered, otherwise a business will start to be uncompetitive (Fernie et al., 2010). Research findings suggest that Portugal is

technologically ready to the Omni-channel, however, Portuguese risk taking culture and less informed customers are evading more considerable evolution.

As suggested by retailers, one of the most often mentioned characteristics that will determine the success or failure of an Omni-channel manoeuvre is the technological infrastructure beyond the whole channel strategy. The ability not only to cross information but also making it accessible for retailers to use is likely to influence those that want to achieve the lead. Furthermore and according to Zhang et al. (2010), the low degree of readiness to new channels diminish retailers' flexibility especially because of their higher investment in the physical channel.

Following the literature (Verhoef et al., 2015), Portuguese retailers also recognize the importance of coherence, complement, efficiency and unique experience. Retailers mentioned that Omni-channel is part of having multiple channels, including the online for delivering the product also propose that Portuguese retailers understand that for reaching Omni-channel, first they should diversify formats and deliver products in all channels that matter.

This research suggested that retailers are looking at channels' strategies as a melting pot of customers, processes, technology but they still are not able to find the right balance that would work cross-sector. While leading retailers are those that are able to innovate and establish a closer relationship with customers, followers might be considered those that are learning from the first group initiatives. Perhaps when it will be possible to talk about the true Omni-channel in Portugal, in the sense that a complete integration between channels to deliver a unique experience for customers is observed (Harris, 2012), followers will be investing in that orientation.

Regarding the customers' side, further analytics and big data initiatives involving data mining procedures are likely to increase our current knowledge of customers. Retailers spent a considerable amount of time thinking that "the more customers the better" but, right now, it is clear that targeting the right customers will generate further profit. Therefore, the value of straightforward databases is increasing and investing in information is fundamental for leaders. Omni-channel is seen as a mean of accelerating this value acquisition process (Zhang et al., 2010).

The internet and the mobile channel are rapidly increasing their importance in today's context. With internet of things, customers are online 24/7 through multiple gadgets and platforms. They

express their desires, feelings and locations through social networks and the ability to connect their knowledge into business may define future retail leaders (Rigby, 2011).

To practitioners the results suggest that in the future they expect user-friendly platforms and guarantees, especially regarding payments. Virtual wardrobes with current clothes' condition and frequent occasion styles, online fridge necessities (such as lack of milk) and hipersegmentation manoeuvres performed by geolocation initiatives may be the nearest and technological future to experience.

A lot has been discussed on showrooming, humanized stores and customers' less time to shop. Are B&Ms going to disappear? This project suggested that neither bricks are going to disappear nor will they not be fundamental in the future. In fact, retailers are thinking on ways to reinventing their stores for leveraging customers' experience.

Retailers should not be worried about providing a Multi, Cross or Omni-channel strategy, they should be worried about what their customers are expecting them to offer. Depending on their sector, the solution might differ. As Emrich et al. (2015) concluded, asymmetrical integration may surpass full integration depending on the specificities of their customers and therefore, it would be interesting to have further studies reflecting these differences.

Findings suggest that retailers believe that the ability to integrate channels into Omni-channel manoeuvres will enable economies of scale. However, the investment will be considerable and the payback will not be quick. Of course it will depend on the risk profile of the retail chain but since Portugal is technologically ready for this advancement, would it not be the time for achieving the lead?

4. Conclusions

4.1. General considerations

Retail world is characterized by change and during the last decade, change was even more frequent due to the appearance of the online channel and new additional digital channels such as mobile and social media (Verhoef et al., 2015). Retailers ought to rethink their business models and permanently adapt to these changes, Omni-channel presented itself as the next change and in that sense the focus of the projects was on the current state of the B2C channels' strategies within Portugal.

The distinctive aspects of this project are the following: I - personalized analysis of Portuguese channels' strategies within Retail; II – qualitative appraisal to a not well explored matter in literature; III – output that could be considered by retailers when planning their future strategy.

The possibility of providing inputs for decreasing the number of failures in Omni-channel implementations, mostly for siloed approaches, is something that is crucial and an area in which this paper aims to contribute.

This project was able to bring together the Portuguese retailers' view of their channel strategy. By combining their ideas and contrasting with literature, learning topics were identified so as to enable retailing players to at least consider the daily-basis of their channel strategy.

While distinguishing Portugal because of its considerable disparity of population density across the country, higher concentration of population in the coast and broader buying periods with dilated schedules, findings suggest that:

1. **Portugal has lower maturity than retail leading countries.** The lack of players operating in the online channel, the low digitalization level of Portuguese small and medium enterprises and the fact that Portuguese customers are less informed, are influencing the evolution of channels' strategies in Portugal.
2. **True Omni-channel strategies still do not exist in Portugal.** Despite the fact that some retailers are innovating in terms of service providing and integration between channels, results suggest that even leaders are performing either Multi-channel/ Cross-channel strategies instead of Omni-channel strategies.

- 3. Retailers' status quo is being challenged by pure players.** Established players have considerably invested during the last decades and their flexibility to adopt Omni-channel strategies lacks. Although an Omni-channel strategy is not always preferred, pure players with lighter business models are threatening those that are not able to adapt.

Regarding the practical considerations that retailers ought to take from this research, the fact that Portugal is technologically ready for the online offering is fundamental to their future decisions. Findings suggest that channels' strategies could evolve to an Omni-channel status and retailers believe that they could create economies of scale.

Before starting this project, a discussion on how the most valuable contribution to Channels' strategies literature could be generated was performed. Having had the possibility of targeting either customers or retailers, the choice of retailers proved to be the most accurate because of the early maturity stage of Portuguese market that would not be adequate to analyse true Omni-channel customers but only customer behaviours and expectations that might be translated to the previous. Furthermore, as top retailers of the Portuguese market were interviewed, their ideas and impressions could allow to move forward and the research findings will enable the Omni-channel opportunity within the Portuguese market.

4.2 Project limitations and future research directions

Almost every project starts with the ambition of introducing something remarkable to literature. In fact, this is one of those examples. At the beginning, the creation of a framework that was able to potentiate channels' strategies within retail business worldwide was considered.

As far as the project was evolving, it was narrowed to the population that it should study. The result of this reflection was the definition of the current state of channels' strategies in Portuguese B2C markets. It was aimed that, for these population, conclusions make sense and further studies are recommended not only for other countries but also for B2B markets.

Considering the desired feasibility that was aimed for the project, the minimum recommended number of interviews that gathered relevant knowledge in the field was analysed. After analysing a couple of similar studies and discussed with professionals, it was concluded that this sort of studies needed to have a minimum of 8 interviews. Based on evidence, the opinion of 12 retailers

is able to transmit a sound opinion on the Portuguese state. Though, some of the analysed topics could have reached more detailed conclusions if more people had been interviewed.

While intending to gather the maximum number of relevant interviews, a transversal group of retailers were addressed. Their sectors follow: books and electronics, fashion and grocery with the intention of formulating a general overview of retailers. Nevertheless, future studies would increase literature quality if sector oriented. Furthermore, it would be possible to increase the detail level for each sector and overcome the fact that in some occasions general knowledge may not be extrapolated into specific knowledge.

As it was mentioned before, Omni-channel strategies are still in its early ages. There are not significant players in the market operating on these sort of strategy but literature also lacks in terms of analysing the outcomes of these strategies. Depending on the evolution of channels' strategy within retail, it would be interesting to investigate the antecedents and consequences of implementing and sustaining an Omni-channel strategy. While our study was focused on the current state of channels' strategy, it could play a major role in formulating the main antecedents of implementing Omni-channel strategies. Though, retail change is considerable and since the maturity of Omni-channel strategies is still distinct, there might be further modifications that ought to be considered when formulating the current antecedents.

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Appendices

A.1. Results of the data analysis to the interviews

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
RETAIL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT	6	8
Competition	4	5
Direct trade	3	3

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
LEADER Vs. FOLLOWER	12	38
Brand scale and notoriety	2	2
Define concepts and trends	7	11
Experience across channels	5	8
Internal adaptation	2	10
Online development	1	3
Provision timing	4	4

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
PORTUGUESE RETAIL CURRENT STATE	11	67
Portuguese customers' behaviors	8	26
Less loyal	1	1
Less time to shop	2	2
More price oriented	6	7
Privacy concerns	1	2
Search of the niche or different	1	1
Shopping trends	4	8
Small shops consumption	2	4
Spanish trends	1	1
Portuguese economy	9	30
Drop in consumption	4	5
Economic recovery	2	2
Higher competition	6	11

Higher market concentration	1	1
Price Drop	3	6
Tax increases	1	1
Portuguese legal aspects	3	3
Online law policies	1	1
Retailers' selling hours are higher than in the EU	1	1
Tourist promotion	1	1
Small and coastal country	3	8

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
OMNI-CHANNEL CHARACTERISTICS & GOALS	10	52
Coherent and complementary multiple channels	8	26
Drifts from online growth	1	1
Efficient supply chain and stock management	2	3
Multiple channels for delivering the product	5	9
Unique experience for customers	8	13

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
OMNI-CHANNEL CUSTOMERS	12	56
Customer behaviors	11	32
Increasing complaints and requirements	2	2
Customers ask for immediate satisfaction	1	1
WOM influence on buying	1	1
Technology and Online	11	30
Costumers do not want QR codes	1	1
Digital growth	6	17
Increasing influence of social networks	3	3
Online buying habits	7	9
Customer expectations	9	24
Access online offering	4	6
Coherence between channels and according with events	4	7
Customers seek freedom and convenience	5	7

Personalization	4	4-
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Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
INDIVIDUAL CHANNEL POTENTIATION	5	24
Offline	5	12
Personalized promotions	5	5
Potentiate in-store experience	3	7
Online	4	12
Data tracking to personalize service	3	6
Promote cross-channel and cross-selling initiatives	4	6

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
CHOOSING PROCESS	4	5
Customer profile and type of product	2	3
Omni-channel promise fails with lack of coherence	2	2

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
CHANNEL INTEGRATION	11	40
Change of information	9	11
Coherence of strategies across channels	8	16
Cross-channel potentiation	2	3
Data integration	4	9

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
BRAND ROLE	9	26
Gives consistency	7	10
Nevertheless the brand needs to prove their valences	2	5
Strength and recognition	5	11

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
BUDGET ALLOCATION	8	12

Allocation depends on a unique channel strategy	2	2
Create an analytics layer	1	1
Gradually invest according to results	3	3
No patterns	5	6

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
ASSOCIATED INVESTMENT	7	12
Importance of investing in the online channel	4	8
Individual investments with complementary focus	2	2
Offline oriented depends on the type of product	2	2

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
ROADMAP	12	39
Define the product or service and the market	8	15
Customer centric appraisal	2	2
International benchmarks	2	3
Operationalize strategy	8	24
Bricks vs clicks as a learning stage to OC	1	1
Internal culture	1	1
Offline stores afterwards	2	3
Pure player to start	3	10
Stock management	1	2
Technology to support	4	6

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
CURRENT THREATS	11	60
Degree of readiness to new channels	10	32
Lack of integration between channels	7	14
Misperception of Omni-channel advantages and disadvantages	3	3
Pure players threatening existing players	5	11

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
POWER CONFLICT	9	13
Depends on company's strategy	1	1
No conflict	5	5
There is conflict	5	7

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
EXPECTED RETURN	12	62
Channels	5	6
Consider the impact of each variable on each channel	1	1
Each channel leverages others	4	5
Customers	8	18
Loyalty	7	13
ROPO	4	5
Long-term return	8	14
Not evolving to MC or OC implies losing market share and revenues	2	4
Omni-channel would not be fulfilled shortly	1	1
Strengthen the power of the brand	2	2
Management of operational costs	11	22
Measure Omni-channel return and not return by channel	1	2
Stock efficiency	10	15

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
MOST IMPORTANT TRENDS	12	120
Industry	10	58
Emergence of B2C opportunities to B2B players	1	1
Increase level of collaboration	2	10
More rational stores' openings	8	23
Online channel growth	8	21
Retailers	12	62
Channels' integration	8	17
Future of retail stores	8	17

Retail is evolving to specialization concepts	5	8
Service diversification and personalization	4	8
Technological savvy retailers	4	12

Dimension/ category/ subcategory	Sources	References
PORTUGUESE RETAIL MATURITY LEVEL	7	31
Over 5 years late to retail leading countries	5	8
Portugal is technologically ready to OC growth	2	2
Portuguese customers are less informed	1	2
Slower growth rate	5	19
Economic crisis	1	1
Few players in the online channel	3	9
Portuguese risk taking culture	3	4
Retail structures	1	1
Technological barriers	3	3

A.2. Contact method (translated into English)

Dear XXXX,

My name is André Lima and I am a MSc in Management student at School of Economics and Management, University of Porto. At the moment I am developing my thesis related with channels' strategy in Retail and, after looking at LinkedIn I come up with your profile.

Taking in consideration your previous experience, I would like to invite you for a 30 minutes interview in which I would like to talk about your vision regarding channels' strategies.

I am certain that your expertise would add value to my project and would allow me to a better final result.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Thanks in advance.

Best regards,

André Lima